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**ADDRESS TO THE  
INFORMATION SERVICES DIVISION  
CIA AUDITORIUM  
BY  
THE HONORABLE RICHARD HELMS  
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE  
17 NOVEMBER 1971**



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## **ADDRESS BY DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE TO INFORMATION SERVICES DIVISION**

CIA Auditorium  
17 November 1971

I wanted to come down here this morning to be with you for a variety of reasons. I want to end up by devoting a few minutes to try to answer your questions—whatever they may be. I don't know how well I'll be able to do with the range and variety you'll probably have for me but I'll do the best I can, and I want you to feel that you've got a free run here. There's no reason to be inhibited. If there are things on your mind, this is one of the principal reasons for my coming: to see if I could either straighten them out or at least get you the answers that you deserve to have.

Primarily, however, I did want to tell you that we all recognize the importance of the job that you are all doing, not only in the life of the Agency but in the government as a whole. I'd like to encourage you to keep up the good work—even improve on it. Now those seem like two rather simple, straightforward and, in a way, homely charges, and yet they're gravely important to our country; basically there is nothing in the Central Intelligence Agency more important than the work you're doing.

It is a little bit like the human physiology—the hands and the feet and the brain and so forth get along pretty well as long as the heart is functioning properly, but once it ceases functioning properly everything else goes to pot. Your Division obviously is the lifeblood of any counterespionage operation. Since the Agency is responsible in the United States Government for counterespionage, and has virtually sole responsibility for this, at least as far as the overseas areas are concerned, you can imagine how important in my life it is that your operation should be functioning well and doing its work accurately.

I know that some of you may feel that you are taken for granted, that your work is taken for granted. I can assure you that is not true, as I have

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just indicated. I certainly know where you all work. I was involved in developing your space requirements before the building was built, and it was quite a job to get this laid out in any reasonable way. I've been through the area since. It's been some months, but I have been through various parts of it two or three times.

And I do know what you do. My interest in this goes back a long time. Our records problems began to reach a crisis stage in the late fifties when, as Chief of Operations in the Clandestine Services (or Clandestine "Service" as Mr. Karamessines now tells me I must call it) I set up and chaired the Clandestine Service Records Committee to establish records policy.

I was convinced then, as I am now, that it would be hard to exaggerate the importance of records to the clandestine mission of the Agency. Without the information you process, without proper processing of that information, we would be out of business. Instead we have what is undoubtedly the best and the most effective information processing system of any intelligence service in the world. Much of the credit for this goes to you and to your predecessors.

This isn't to say we can't improve on it—of course we can. We're always looking for ways to do things better, more quickly, more economically, and I know you too want to see improvements made. Proof of this is in the number of Employee Suggestions you have submitted and the number of awards you have won over the past five years: 47 awards, totaling nearly \$4000. I must say I think that's a very good record indeed. ISD leadership is constantly aiming at improvements within the Division, and I know I can count on all of you to go on in this same forward-looking way.

50X1 Fifteen years ago we embarked on pioneer machine methods to help handle Clandestine Service records. At that time some  people were trying to keep up with close to 15 million items in the Main Index. It was estimated that in ten years the workload would require three times as many people. But even then we had problems of space, budget, personnel ceilings—just as we have today—and we couldn't accept such an increase. So we undertook to rationalize and to mechanize our information handling procedures, to keep what we needed and be able to locate and retrieve it promptly.

First we developed the Document Control System for controlling the flow of paper within the Clandestine Service. Then we devised, with IBM, the WALNUT mechanism for miniaturized storage and quick re-

trieval of a good part of our very large paper holdings. Next we began to mechanize our 201 system. We also started to produce index cards for field stations and developed our counterintelligence collation system. Since then you did a prototype of a mechanized index, and I am happy to learn that the prospects for realizing the dream of a mechanized Main Index in 1973 seem good.

Thanks to some of you here today, and to others in RID at the time, we put things on a much sounder basis. We eliminated a lot of unneeded paper. We got rid of a lot of useless index cards. We improved our procedures, became more efficient in our information processing. Ten years ago your Index Section performed about 20 name checks a day for each Section employee. Within five years the rate had doubled.

We couldn't expect production to climb indefinitely at anywhere near that rate. And it didn't. But it has climbed—to over two and a half times what it was in 1960—quite a record!

50X1 And instead of the 300% personnel increase projected 15 years ago, your work force has actually decreased. For those statistically minded, the Main Index has been cut in half, to less than seven million cards. Your present staff of [ ] people, working with that base, makes 450,000 counterintelligence checks annually. It digests 135,000 new records every year. And it performs a variety of other functions which have been added since the mid-fifties.

During this period there has been no loss of quality, and this is obviously most important. For we are judged, and should be judged, much more on quality than on quantity. ISD is a big, complex organization of many parts, many people, and many different jobs. You know this just as well as I do. The quality of its product depends on all of you, whether you are analyzing a dispatch from the field, or making sure a document is properly filed, or replying to a query from another agency—or doing any of a dozen other essential things.

I recall examples of quality work which reflect your care and alertness. For instance, there was the Polish "economist" who applied at our Warsaw Embassy for a visa to visit a "cousin" in New York. An ISD employee found an index card, under a slightly different surname, with no given name and no birthdate. Some people would have stopped there. But this employee was persistent and alert, and he backtracked this name through several variations and aliases until he tentatively identified him as a Polish intelligence officer. His identification was subsequently confirmed [ ] And so this ISD employee—who rightly didn't 50X1

regard his job as just routine and unchallenging—frustrated the efforts of Polish intelligence to slip one of their officers through U.S. passport controls.

Sometimes your professionalism has served humane interests as well. Let me give you the case of the OSS agent who was arrested and tortured by the Nazis, and subsequently died, as a result of his activities in behalf of our Government. That his widow didn't press her claim for 18 years made it all the more difficult to assemble and research possibly pertinent background material. But after this was done and the widow was awarded suitable compensation, the Director of Security commended ISD's performance for "the tenacity and expertise used in pulling together the scanty and often clouded reports" on this agent's recruitment, service, and death. I have learned of other cases where careful checking has led to the correction of errors made elsewhere and has helped CIA to set the record straight. Any of us can make a mistake—but it is part of our job to make the fewest possible mistakes. Even one oversight can be very costly indeed.

So, as you well know, we have a process and system of controls to try to prevent or correct errors. As a case in point, substantive replies to name trace requests from other agencies are reviewed by the CI Staff. But I understand that your record has become so good that your replies normally require only brief scanning by the CI people. And where they used to take weeks to prepare, you now handle them in days, even in hours.

When I talk about the good work you have done and are doing, I don't want you to think that I am not aware that you have problems. Last year the Inspector General took a good look at ISD and came up with some recommendations. We have tried to make improvements, and I believe we have moved ahead. Bringing you all together in a single Division, and upgrading that Division, is itself a real step forward. On a smaller scale lots of other things have been done and are being worked on. But there will always be room for improvement, and I look to you to suggest and to bring about such improvements in all your fields—computer programs, the management of records, the processing of information.

We are also concerned with your growth as individuals and your progress within the Agency. We are going to do what we can to help, both for your good and for ours. For as your capabilities grow, the sum of our overall capabilities is increased. That is why two out of every three of you receive CIA-sponsored training, internal or external, every year. And this doesn't include those ambitious and energetic employees who plug away on their own, to qualify in typing, or complete a computer course, or acquire a college degree.

Every year you infuse good new blood into other parts of the Clandestine Service through your Professional Trainee Program and in other ways. Incidentally I'd advise you not to underestimate the valuable training and experience you acquire in ISD. Young ISD alumni moving into operational jobs in Area Divisions have often found that their better understanding of information processing procedures and their greater appreciation of the importance of proper records management give them real advantages over many of their peers.

Many of you younger people will be helping to prepare this Agency for moving into the 21st century. I won't be around then but, like you, I have to look ahead. I am told that our records effort at that time will pretty well dispense with the movement of paper from one point to another and rely instead on digital or facsimile display of centrally held records relayed by secure electronic communications. But whatever the shape of things to come, your continuing constructive and imaginative efforts are absolutely essential. No matter how good the machines we produce, we cannot eliminate, we cannot underestimate, the human factor. So much depends upon the quality of the work you do!

In a report submitted to me earlier this year the statement is made and I quote:

"The job of transmitting information from its place of origin to the user, of caring for it subsequently, now ranks in importance with information collection and intelligence production."

I believe this is a fair statement. It is a measure of the vital job you are performing as you assemble, process, and maintain a high-quality record of Clandestine Service operations and information.

I want to say again why I came here today (and it is indeed as I've just done): to stress the importance of the role you play in the overall scheme of things, and to express my appreciation for the way you do it. And I want to conclude on just one further note. It has impressed me that in American life today that there has grown into it a strange sloppiness, in a whole lot of ways. The streets look dirtier. The garbage cans seem to overflow more frequently. The litter that one sees, just in the hallways of our own building at the end of a day: all of these things are somehow indications of a kind of a sloppiness that seems to have taken over in this country. I don't want to exaggerate this, and I don't intend to exaggerate it, but I think you know what I mean. And there just isn't anything that one can do that will corrupt or undermine any activity faster than a certain kind of sloppiness.



This is certainly true in manufacturing. If you don't put the bolts on right, the car is going to fall apart. It's certainly true of surgery and medicine. It's certainly true of the law. It's true of all things that one does in this life and yet we seem to have had an awful lot of it, in the last five years particularly. I don't know what it arises from. I don't know why it is that people don't take pride in the way they behave, the way they do their job, the way they produce their work—why they're satisfied to produce a messy piece of work when they could have produced a perfectly decent-looking piece of work. I don't know why people continue to misspell words in memoranda, write sentences that aren't sentences, do a lot of things they know better about. And when you see that at an Agency with the quality of the people that this Agency has, what must it be like in certain others where this is not the case, because after all you are a privileged group. You wouldn't be here if you didn't have certain basic qualifications and basic educational requirements fulfilled, and all the rest of it. Now I mention this in concluding for only one reason and that is: particularly in the kind of work you do, accuracy and care is absolutely fundamental. I would not like to think that because those around you seem to be getting increasingly sloppy that that was an excuse for you to be as well. Please!

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